

THE POLITICAL PULSE

In a paradoxical finding, it emerges that UPA-II is a couple of points higher than where it was two years ago in the ratings

A ruling coalition midway through its second term faces a crisis of legitimacy. The government's approval ratings fall. Its record on tackling corruption, price rise and terrorism is viewed with deep scepticism. The Prime Minister's own credibility takes a hit. Yet its share of the popular vote does not drop. When the dummy votes "cast" in the survey are counted, the ruling coalition is a couple of points higher than where it was two years ago. This is the seemingly paradoxical finding of the CNN-IBN & CNBC TV-18 'State of the Nation Poll' carried out by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and presented by *The Hindu*. When asked who they would vote for if Lok Sabha elections were held tomorrow, a significant proportion of those who disapprove of the government said they would vote for the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA). Mid-term opinion surveys in India tend to over-estimate the ruling party at the national level, especially if it is the Congress, and under-estimate all the small players and independents. The estimates presented here by the CSDS team take this bias into account and adjust for it based on the past record of such over-reporting. Even after this adjustment, the UPA would have secured about 38 per cent of the votes, up by two percentage points compared to its vote share in 2009. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) too would have gone up by two points to reach 26 per cent. Despite all the negatives associated with the current context, the ruling coalition has maintained its 12 percentage point lead over its main rival.

There is no dramatic change in the social basis of voting that could help explain this paradox. The urban, educated, upper class vote that had significantly swung from the Bharatiya Janata Party to the Congress in 2009 appears to be tilting back in favour of the BJP. The Congress is beginning to cultivate a youth constituency, as is the NDA among the peasant OBCs. The Bahujan Samaj Party faces a significant erosion in its Dalit vote base inside and outside Uttar Pradesh, and following the election defeats, the Left has experienced a sharp erosion in its

support among the poorest in Kerala and West Bengal. Otherwise the social profile of voting is along expected lines.

A key to understanding this paradox is of course to look at the State-wise break-up. As States constitute the principal arena of political contestations, the national mood is filtered through the prism of State-level political equations. The range of political options available, and the point at which the poll was carried out in the electoral cycle of the State, can produce unexpected consequences. The UPA is holding on in some of the States where it won since 2009: Maharashtra, Kerala, West Bengal and Assam, and to some extent Haryana. The Congress appears to be gaining from an anti-incumbency sentiment in some key States: Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa are likely to swing towards the Congress if Lok Sabha elections are held now. (Of these, only Karnataka favours the Congress in case of an Assembly contest.) These gains in votes more than make up for the marginal losses in Gujarat and Rajasthan and some serious erosion in Andhra Pradesh. Except Rajasthan, the NDA's vote gains come from States such as Bihar and Gujarat where it has already hit a peak. The UPA is poised for the next round of Assembly elections too: the popular tide seems to be turning in favour of the Congress in Punjab and Uttarakhand, while the party is set to improve its performance in Uttar Pradesh.

Another way to understand this paradoxical outcome is to keep in mind the wider context of the political vacuum that characterises national politics. If the government is incoherent and devoid of any sense of purpose, the Opposition too lacks an agenda or credibility. The absence of political imagination and judgment that runs across the party political spectrum means that the anger with the ruling establishment does not get channelled into a political alternative. In the absence of a credible alternative, the unhappy public turns back to the ruling party to look for the new face.

Yogendra Yadav

(Queries about the survey may be sent to election@csds.in)

CNN-IBN & CNBC-TV18 STATE OF THE NATION POLL Conducted by CSDS

PRESENTED BY *THE HINDU*

MINOR GAINS FOR BOTH NATIONAL COALITIONS

Alliances	2009 (actual)	2011 (estimate)
UPA	36.4	38
NDA	24.1	26
Others	39.5	36

Note: Vote-share estimates are based on the voting intentions declared by respondents through a secret dummy ballot. These raw figures have been adjusted by the CSDS team for the known patterns of under-reporting for independents and very small parties and over-reporting for the ruling party/alliance.

Congress allies in 2009 included J&KNC, IUML, KC(M), NCP, DMK, TRMC, JMM, RPI, VCK. BJP allies in 2009 included AGP, JD(U), INLD, Shiv Sena, NPF, SDF, RLD, Akali Dal. Congress allies in 2011 are NCP, IUML, KEC(M), JVM (Marandi), Trinamool Congress and DMK. BJP allies in 2011 are JD(U), JMM, AJSU, Shiv Sena, RPI (Athawale), Akali Dal. Others include the Left and the BSP, besides other parties not allied with the UPA or the NDA.

The UPA is ahead of the NDA in terms of vote-share by a significant margin. Both the UPA and the NDA have improved on their 2009 vote shares.

UPA GAINS AMONG YOUNGER AND RURAL VOTERS

Categories	UPA vote share	
	Vote 2009	Vote 2011
ALL	36	38
UPA does well among ...		
Villagers	35	38
Young (18-25 years)	34	40
Hindu upper castes	33	38
Muslims	47	51
UPA fares worse among ...		
City-dwellers	41	38
Non-literates	37	37
Old (Above 55 years)	39	37

The UPA has won many more supporters in rural areas, among the youth (18-25 years), among Hindu upper castes and among Muslims since 2009. It has lost some support among city-dwellers and old voters when compared to 2009.

NDA GAINS AMONG URBAN AND UPPER CLASS VOTERS

Categories	NDA vote share	
	Vote 2009	Vote 2011
ALL	24	26
NDA does well among ...		
City-dwellers	24	31
Upper class	30	35
Peasants (mainly Hindus)	23	31
Dalits	15	20
NDA fares worse among ...		
Hindu upper castes	42	41
Hindu OBCs	27	27

Compared to 2009, the NDA is gaining substantially among city-dwellers, upper class voters, Hindu dominant peasants and Dalits. It has lost some support from Hindu upper castes.

EROSION OF TRADITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEFT AND BSP

Categories	Vote 2009	Vote 2011
Left vote among poor	13	6
BSP vote among Dalits	20	13

Both the Left and the BSP are losing their grip over their core/traditional voters - that is, the poor and Dalits. The Left's support among poor voters has been reduced to half. Dalits are beginning to move away from the BSP.

THE MOOD IN THE STATES

Uttar Pradesh

The Congress is well ahead of all rivals in a parliamentary contest; the SP has an edge over the BSP in an Assembly contest; the Congress is close on their heels while the BJP is way behind

Uttarakhand

The Congress begins with a thin edge over the incumbent BJP in a tight race for Assembly elections

Punjab

The Congress is ahead of the ruling Akali-BJP alliance in an Assembly contest

Gujarat

The BJP is comfortably ahead both in national and State-level elections; could increase its earlier margin over the Congress

Maharashtra

The ruling Congress-NCP coalition is still comfortably ahead of the Shiv Sena-BJP; a higher lead likely in a Lok Sabha contest than in Assembly elections

Haryana

The INLD plus BJP could now be a match for the ruling Congress as the Chief Minister loses popularity

Madhya Pradesh

The Congress takes a clear lead in the Lok Sabha elections, but in a neck and neck contest with the ruling BJP for Assembly elections

Rajasthan

The BJP bounces back, enjoys a slight edge both in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections

Chhattisgarh

The ruling BJP is still comfortably ahead

Delhi

The Congress' lead narrows

Karnataka

The Congress takes a lead at both levels, enjoys a huge margin in a Lok Sabha contest; a setback for the BJP

Andhra Pradesh

The Congress' vacillation may cost it both Telangana and Andhra; the ruling party trails the TRS in the Telangana region, and the YSR Congress in the rest of the State

Jharkhand

A close contest between the Congress and the BJP in a multipolar contest. The JMM, JVM and AJSU hold the key.

Orissa

The Congress bounces back to be favourite in a Lok Sabha contest, but the BJD continues to be a favourite for Assembly elections

Bihar

The JD(U)-BJP combine consolidates its position further since the spectacular Assembly election victory in November 2010

Kerala

The UDF establishes a clear lead over the LDF following a narrow victory in the Assembly contest in May

Assam

Fresh from its Assembly win, the Congress likely to sweep if Lok Sabha elections are held now

Tamil Nadu

The ruling AIADMK is ahead in the Lok Sabha stakes; the Congress is better placed than the DMK

West Bengal

The TMC-Congress combine is way ahead in the Lok Sabha vote, improving upon its spectacular Assembly performance

Note on methodology

Figures for the vote-shares of the different political parties presented here are based on estimates made from the 'State of the Nation Poll' conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). Besides questions on current social, economic and political issues, voters were asked two questions on their voting preferences. The first question was on which party they would vote for if elections to the State Assembly were held in the given State "tomorrow." The second question was on which party they would vote for if elections to the Lok Sabha were held "tomorrow."

The question on voting preference was administered using a dummy ballot paper and a dummy ballot box to maintain the confidentiality of the vote.

The estimate of vote-shares for different political parties are based on a careful analysis of the respondents' stated preference of voting for a party as marked on the ballot paper, which carried the election symbols of all the major political parties in the State. Since all surveys suffer from the problem of over-estimation of votes for big parties and under-estimation for smaller parties, the estimate of vote-shares was made after carefully adjusting the vote-share for smaller parties and independents using the vote share of the smaller parties and independents as base. These estimates are based on a total of 20,854 completed interviews spread across 1,290 locations of 325 Assembly constituencies in 19 States. The Assembly constituencies in each State were selected using the systematic random sampling technique. Within each selected Assembly constituency, two polling booths were selected using the systematic random sampling technique. The respondents were selected from the updated electoral rolls using the systematic random sampling method. Keeping in mind the low completion rate (due to various reasons) the respondents were over-sampled. A total of 39,000 respondents were approached for the interview, of which 20,854 were successfully interviewed. The sample was not uniformly spread in all the States. In big States such as Uttar Pradesh (2,502), Andhra Pradesh (1,418), Bihar (1,000) and Madhya Pradesh (1,013), it is bigger when compared to smaller States such as Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala and Assam. A few States such as Gujarat (1,263), Karnataka (1,601), Punjab (1,438), and Uttaranchal (868) are exceptions where the sample is bigger compared to the proportionality of the size of the State.

There is a greater level of confidence on the vote-share estimates for parties in States where the sample is bigger, when compared to States where the sample is small.

How to read the tables

- All figures in percentage and rounded off.
- Data for 2009 based on the National Election Study conducted during the Lok Sabha polls.
- Data for 2007 based on the 'State of the Nation' survey conducted by the CSDS in January that year.
- If figures do not add up to 100 per cent, it is because some respondents had no opinion.



UTTAR PRADESH: SP LEADS THE PACK

	Assembly 2007	2011 estimate
Congress	9	20
BJP	17	13
BSP	30	23
SP	25	25
Others	19	19



The Congress appears to have made a spectacular comeback in Uttar Pradesh. The party has doubled its vote-share in the State compared to 2007. The Samajwadi Party is holding on to its vote-base and is the most preferred choice of voters. The BSP and the BJP are expected to suffer heavy losses, if elections to the State Assembly are held now.

PUNJAB: THE CONGRESS RECOVERS

	Assembly 2007	2011 estimate
Congress	41	47
SAD-BJP	45	39
Others	14	14



The Congress has not only recovered in Punjab but also established a big lead over the Shiromani Akali Dal-BJP combine in the run-up to the Assembly elections expected early next year.

UTTARAKHAND: CONGRESS EDGE IN TIGHT RACE

	Assembly 2007	2011 estimate
Congress	30	37
BJP	32	34
BSP	12	6
UKD	5	2
Others	21	21



The Congress is doing much better in Uttarakhand when compared to 2007, and has overtaken the BJP. The BJP has also improved its position slightly. Both the Congress and the BJP are gaining at the expense of the BSP and the UKD.

KARNATAKA: CONGRESS ON A COMEBACK TRAIL

	Assembly 2008	2011 estimate
Congress	35	40
BJP	34	32
JD(S)	19	16
Others	12	12



There has been a turnaround in Karnataka with the Congress making an impressive comeback. The party has not only improved its vote-share compared to 2008 Assembly elections, but has also taken a big lead over the ruling BJP. Support for the JD(S) has declined.

ANDHRA PRADESH: CONGRESS IN DECLINE

	Telangana		Rest of Andhra	
	Assembly 2009	2011 estimate	Assembly 2009	2011 estimate
Congress	33	18	39	32
TDP	21	15	33	24
TRS	10	36	0	0
YSR Cong	-	7	-	36
PRP	12	-	19	-
Others	24	24	9	9



The ruling Congress has lost considerable support in the Telangana region when compared to 2009. On the other hand, support for the TRS, which is demanding a separate state of Telangana, has risen by three times. In the rest of Andhra Pradesh (Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra) too, the Congress is in the second position behind Jagannathan Reddy's YSR Congress. The five-month-old party has made impressive inroads into the Congress and TDP vote bases. The proposed merger of the PRP with the Congress is not helping the latter much. The space vacated by the PRP has been taken over by the YSR Congress instead.